

News Release

New U of M, Crookston Chancellor Fred Wood Has Minnesota Ties

By Itollefs on Wednesday, July 11, 2012



Fred Wood, the new chancellor of the University of Minnesota, Crookston, spent most of his life in California, but he has family ties to Crookston, Minnesota, and the Red River Valley.

Wood comes to the University of Minnesota after a 26-year career at the University of California, Davis, a public, land-grant research university within the University of California system. There, he served as vice chancellor of student affairs from 2007 to 2012, in addition to holding other leadership positions such as interim vice provost for undergraduate studies and associate dean of the UC Davis College of Letters and Science in addition to concurrently serving as a tenured chemistry faculty member there.

His first Minnesota tie comes through his mother, Jean Turner, who was born in Crookston in 1917. Her parents, Earl and Ada (Cameron) Turner, were both born in St. Vincent, Minn., near the Canadian border, and were farmers. During the Great Depression when she was 12 years old, Jean moved with her family to Libby, Montana, where her family found work in the lumber mills. As the Depression gave way to World War II, Jean and her sister, Lucille, moved to California where they found work in the oil refineries. Jean met and married Jack Winfred Wood, who later became a carpenter, and while living and working in Martinez, California, their son Fred was born along with his two sisters.

Although his father stopped his formal education at high school and his mother did not complete high school, both of Fred Wood's parents valued education, and they keenly encouraged him to attend college. "I'm a true first-generation college student," says Wood, "and as I look back, I can see just how important that single decision was to the story of my life. It really opened the world to me, and I appreciate my parents' encouragement and support of that decision."



Wood started out at a local community college and then earned a B.S. in chemistry and a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry--both from UC Davis. He spent two years as a tenured faculty member at a small community college in northern Idaho before returning to UC Davis to serve as a tenured faculty member and vice chair of the chemistry department.

While attending community college in Pleasant Hill, California, he met Mary Williams, appropriately enough, in his first chemistry class. She accompanied him to UC Davis where she completed her undergraduate degree in entomology. Fred continued his doctoral work in chemistry there, and Mary earned her Master of Library Science degree at UC Berkeley, 50 miles away. The two were married in 1982, and subsequently had three children, Kiel, Meghan, and Moira.



The value of education remains a strong force within the Wood family, and this is where another tie to Minnesota comes into play. Kiel, Fred and Mary's oldest, is an environmental studies graduate from Willamette University and works as a wild land firefighter and rappeller for the U.S. Forest Service; he is also studying to complete a BS degree in nursing. Meghan, their second child, attended and graduated from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and she is currently studying to obtain her doctorate in veterinary medicine at UC Davis. And Moira will be a senior at St. Olaf College in Northfield, where she is studying biomedical anthropology with career goals in international public health.

Wood admires the great regard the citizens of Minnesota have for higher education and considers the University of Minnesota system a gem among all of public education in the United States.

"The size of the Crookston campus is one of the things that drew me to this opportunity--it allows for a strongly student-centered environment and provides a stellar educational experience for students. The size and mission also allow it to be nimble and move relatively quickly to deal with our changing environment," says Wood. "The faculty and staff here have a unique ability to adapt, as they have with the transformation over its history from a boarding school to a two-year college to a baccalaureate-level university several years ago." He also cites the focus on experiential learning and the integration of technology across the board with the laptop computer initiative as two other very important aspects of the UMC experience. "Since they have the opportunity to work with it every day I'm not sure the faculty and staff realize just how distinctive their use of technology is and just how well they are preparing graduates for their lives after college. It's really quite remarkable," he adds.

"Mary and I are extremely excited to be a part of the University of Minnesota, Crookston, and the Crookston community," says Wood. He will reside in the guest suite on campus in Evergreen Hall until his apartment in town is ready in August. Mary will join him after she ties up some loose ends with her work and family matters, but she will visit regularly until then.

"The University of Minnesota system, much like the University of California system, continues to be integral to its home state, and the fact that a large number of students attending the Crookston campus are first generation students is not lost on me," Wood says. "Those first steps into higher education can be intimidating, but they can also be wonderful and inspiring. And with the supportive, friendly environment I see here, it's not surprising to me to see the growth and success that has occurred on this campus.

"My predecessor Chancellor Chuck Casey set the stage for continued growth and success," adds Wood, "and I'm honored and humbled to be able to follow him as the leader of U of M, Crookston campus."

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 26 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and 36 concentrations, including 10 online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,600 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photos, at top: Fred Wood at his desk during his second day as chancellor.

Middle, right: Mary and Fred Wood

Bottom, left: Moira, Meghan, and Kiel

News Categories

Miscellaneous

Tweet

News Home

News Archives



Small Campus. Big Degree..

Employment
Events Calendar
Academic Calendar
Library
Directories
Maps, Directions & Parking
Quick Facts
Bookstore

Faculty & Staff
Email & Calendar
Contact Webmaster
System Website
Home

2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | umcinfo@umn.edu
© 2021 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.
The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
[Privacy Statement](#)